

Vermont Project SEARCH

A task force has been created to explore the launching of a Vermont Project SEARCH site in the Fall of 2014. Project SEARCH (PS) is a high school transition program for youth with developmental disabilities. The PS High School Transition Program is a unique, business-led, one-year, school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and relevant job-skills training through strategically designed internships. The goal for each student participant is to obtain more complex competitive employment. NH launched the River Valley PS site, now in its second year, at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. This program included 3 VT students as well as Lincoln Street, a Vermont based Specialized Service Agency. In its first year the River Valley PS site had 100% employment rates for its graduating students from Vermont.

For more information about project SEARCH, you can go to the following websites:

[Project SEARCH overview video](#)

National Project SEARCH website: <http://www.projectsearch.us/>

The VT taskforce includes representation from the following VT organizations: VT Agency of Education, Division of Disability and Aging Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, a Specialized Service Agency (Lincoln Street), and Creative Workforce Solutions.

This task force is exploring what areas of Vermont will be a good candidate for a PS site. Potential sites must meet these minimum criteria:

- 10-12 eligible (eligible for developmental services and for PS) students in their final year of high school;
- Medical Center (hospital) with over 500 employees;
- Availability of public transportation for students;
- An existing working collaboration between the area DS provider, VR and the LEA.

If you are an interested LEA or DS agency please view this 25 minute presentation on the criteria for interested sites and the next steps: <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/418217094>

Please note that interested LEAs and DS agencies must send in their letters of interest **no later than June 30** to Vermont Agency of Education, Attn: John Spinney, 120 State St, Montpelier VT 05620

More specifics about Project SEARCH sites:

Students attend the program for a full school year in the host business/hospital. The business provides access to an on-site classroom that can accommodate up to 12 students. The site is staffed by a special education teacher and one to three job coaches to meet the educational and training needs of the students.

Students are interviewed and selected after referrals are made through their schools, family member, or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and apply in the winter and spring in the year prior to entering the program. A team that is representative of all the partners: Project SEARCH teacher, local special

education director, host business liaison, VR Counselor, Developmental Disability Services staff carry out the selection process which includes tours, student interviews, hands-on assessments at the host sites and scoring on a rubric related to entrance considerations.

Each Project SEARCH site sets a goal to have each student participant obtain more complex competitive employment. As a result, at the completion of the training program, students with developmental disabilities are employed in nontraditional, complex and career oriented jobs. The program provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills to help youth with significant disabilities make successful transitions from school to productive adult life. The Project SEARCH model involves an extensive period of training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, job coaches, and employers. The presence of a Project SEARCH high school transition program can bring about long-term changes in business culture that have far-reaching positive effects on attitudes about hiring people with disabilities and the range of jobs in which they can be successful.

If you have questions or would like more information please feel free to contact your respective task force member.

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